NO. 19
SEP 1990
$1.50 US
$1.85 CAN
80p UK
SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

the SANDMAN™

Dream Country

A Midsummer Night's Dream

neil gaiman - charles vess

JUNE 23RD, 1593.

FATHER? HOW LONG UNTIL WE GET TO AN INN? MY LEGS ARE TIRED OF WALKING.

HMMN? I NEVER SAID WE WERE GOING TO AN INN, HAMNET.

BUT FATHER, YOU *SAID* THAT WE WOULD BE PERFORMING THE *NEW* PLAY TONIGHT. WHERE SHALL WE PLAY IT IF NOT IN AN *INN*?

I HAVE NO IDEA. BUT WE WILL KNOW SOON. KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD AHEAD, LAD.

BUT *FATHER*...

FATHER! I CAN SEE A MAN ON THE WAY, THERE!

INDEED.

LOOK. WILL *HE* BE OUR AUDIENCE?

I FEAR SO, LAD.

WILL! A MOMENT OF YOUR TIME.

YES, KEMP?

I HAVE AN *IDEA*! HOW WOULD IT BE IF I WERE TO BE EATING A *PORK PIE*, IN THE FIRST SCENE? AND THEN, I COULD *SIT* ON IT, DURING BOB ARMIN'S SPEECH.

I THINK NOT.

BUT IT WOULD MAKE THEM *LAUGH*.

IT WOULD *ALSO* MAKE THEM LAUGH IF YOU BROKE WIND LOUDLY, KEMP. *PLEASE*-- JUST THE LINES AND JESTS I HAVE WRIT FOR YOU. WE PERFORM TONIGHT.

CONVERSION BY WILDSTORM

HOLD FAST! WE STOP HERE, MY FRIENDS.

HAMNET, GO AND WAIT WITH CONDELL AND THE OTHER BOYS.

BUT FATHER...

I WROTE IT AS YOU TOLD ME, LORD. IT IS THE BEST THAT I HAVE WRITTEN, TO THIS DATE.

I am sure it is.

You have come then, Will Shekespear.

It is all ready?

SO... WE ARE HERE ON YOUR COMMAND, MY LORD, ON MIDSUMMER'S EVE, BY THE LONG MAN OF WILMINGTON. AN ODD CHOICE OF A PLACE FOR US TO PERFORM...

Odd? Wendel's Mound was a theatre before your race came to this island.

BEFORE THE NORMANS?

Before the humans.

WILL! WHAT IS HAPPENING? WHO IS THIS MAN?

THIS IS THE GENTLEMAN I TOLD YOU OF, RICHARD. IT WAS HE WHO COMMISSIONED THE NEW PLAY.

AH. I AM RICHARD BURBAGE, THE LEADING MAN OF LORD STRANGE'S MEN, AND HEAD OF OUR COMPANY. AND YOU ARE...?

I am your patron, for this play. You must Act well tonight, Richard Burbage.

SIRRAH--I NEVER GIVE OF A PERFORMANCE THAT IS LESS THAN MY BEST. ALTHOUGH THIS BARBAROUS FARRAGO OF FAIRY-TALE HODGEPOTCH IS A MERE CROWD-PLEASER AT BEST.

TRAGEDY IS MY FORTÉ. I HAVE TOLD WILL TO MAKE ME A LOVER MOST TRAGICAL, AND WHEN WE RETURN TO LONDON, I WILL MAKE THEM WEEP TRUE TEARS.

I have no doubts of your ability, Master Burbage.

I SEE YOU UNDERSTAND THE THEATRE, MESSIRE. LEAD US TO YOUR HALL, THEN, AND WE SHALL PERFORM OUR COMEDY FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT.

I have no hall, not that I will take you to.

Here, Richard Burbage, on the downs of Sussex, this will be your stage.

BUT--

WE WILL PLAY IT ON THE GREEN SWARD, RICHARD, JUST AS WE HAVE REHEARSED IT IN FIELDS AND GLADES. THIS IS A NATURAL STAGE. AND THE EVENING IS WARM, AND THE LIGHT WILL LAST US.

WE OWE--I OWE MUCH TO THIS MAN.

HMMPH.

BESTIR YOURSELVES THERE, LUMPKINS! AND INTO YOUR COSTUMES! WE PERFORM THE PLAY HERE, ON THIS GREEN, WITHIN THE HOUR.

I CAN'T *WAIT* UNTIL WE'RE BACK IN THE SMOKE. I *LOATHE* THESE PROVINCIAL TOURS.

AS SOON AS THE PLAGUE SEASON IS OVER, WE'LL BE BACK AT THE CURTAIN, AND THE CROSS KEYS, AND YOU CAN MAKE UP TO *ALL* YOUR ADMIRERS AGAIN...

COW.

AT LEAST I *HAVE* ADMIRERS.

MY FATHER SAYS IT'S NOT THE PLAGUE THAT'S THE PROBLEM, IT'S THE CITY ALDERMEN.

YES, DO ME UP IN THE BACK, THERE'S A LOVE.

DID YOUR FATHER SAY WHO THAT STRANGER IS? OR WHO WE'LL BE PERFORMING FOR?

NO.

HOW DO I LOOK?

YOU LOOK *VERY* PRETTY.

THANK YOU, HAMNET. FOR THAT, YOU SHALL HAVE A STRAWBERRY.

WHO HAS MOVED THE ASS'S HEAD?

WHERE'S THE LANTHORN? AND THE STICKS?

MY BEARD! BY TH' LORD JESU! Y'ART WEARING MY BEARD!

THE KING DOTH KEEP HIS REVELS HERE TONIGHT MARK NOT-- I'FAITH --*TAKE HEED* THE QUEEN COME NOT WITHIN HIS SIGHT...

SIRE, ALL IS PREPARED, AND WE POOR PLAYERS BUT AWAIT OUR CUES.

ARE OUR AUDIENCE ON THEIR WAY?

They wait on the other side of the hill, needing only the unclosing of a portal to make their way to us.

I will call them. Go tell your fellow players to make ready to begin.

Wendel! Open your door.

-A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM...

Written by NEIL GAIMAN, with additional material taken from the play by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. Art by CHARLES VESS. Colored by STEVE OLIFF Lettered by TODD KLEIN. Assistant Editor TOM PEYER. Editor KAREN BERGER. featuring characters created by GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG.

HO HO HO! THEY SAY THE SEVEN ENDLESS ARE FOREVER, MIGHTY DREAM. YOU AND THE OTHER SIX, UNTIL THE DEATH OF TIME ITSELF.

WHAT SAY YOU TO THAT, KING OF THE RIDDLE-REALMS?

ROBIN GOODFELLOW, MIND YOUR MANNERS. WE ARE MY LORD SHAPER'S GUESTS, AND I WILL *NOT* HAVE HIM INSULTED BY A HOBGOBLIN.

Welcome to you, Auberon of Dom-Daniel, and to you also, Lady Titania.

GREETINGS, SHAPER. YOUR INVITATION HAS PROVOK'D MUCH SPECULATION AMONGST OUR PEOPLE. I MUST CONFESS WE THOUGHT WE WERE *QUIT* OF THIS PLANE FOR *EVER*.

Is anything forever?

Nay, good Auberon. It is a fool's prerogative to utter truths that no one else will speak.

Please, take your seats. The diversion I have arranged begins forthwith.

FATHER-- THEY ARE ALL ASSEMBLED.

VERY WELL.

LET *THIS* OUR FIRST PERFORMANCE BE OUR *BEST*, MY FRIENDS. *WILL KEMP--NO* BUSINESS WE HAVE NOT REHEARSED. *HENRY CONDELL*, REMEMBER THAT YOU PLAY A *QUEEN*, NOT A *STRUMPET*.

HIPPOLYTA-- PHILOSTRATE-- *PLACES*.

AND... BREAK A LEG.

...

"NOW, FAIR HIPPOLYTA..."

NOW, FAIR HIPPOLYTA, OUR NUPTIAL HOUR DRAWS ON APACE; *FOUR* HAPPY DAYS BRING IN ANOTHER MOON: BUT *OHH*, METHINKS HOW *SLOW* THE OLD MOON WANES!

...AWAKE THE PERT AND NIMBLE SPIRIT OF MIRTH; TURN MELANCHOLY FORTH TO FUNERALS -- THE *PALE COMPANION* IS *NOT* FOR OUR POMP.

...WAR, DEATH, OR SICKNESS DID LAY SIEGE TO IT, MAKING IT MOMENTANY AS ANY SOUND, SWIFT AS A SHADOW, SHORT AS ANY DREAM, BRIEF AS THE LIGHTNING IN THE COLLIED NIGHT...

IT IS WELL-SPOKEN, SIR. YOUR MORTAL AUTHOR FASHIONS WELL.

I thank you, lady. And I, too, am gratified.

WHAT'S *THIS*? WHAT *MEANS* THIS PRANCING, CHATTERING MORTAL FLESH? METHINKS PERHAPS THE DREAM-LORD BROUGHT US HERE TO *FEED*?

NAR. ISSA WOSSNAME. YOU KNOW. *THINGIE*. A PLAY. THEY'RE *PRETENDIN'* THINGS.

THAT ONE UP THERE, LYSANDER, HE LOVES *HER*, HERMIA, BUT HER *DAD* WANTS HER TO MARRY THE *OTHER ONE*, DEMETRIUS, *SEE*?

NOT REALLY. THESE ARE MORTAL MATING RITUALS?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT, SKARROW. BUT ISSA *LOVE STORY*. NOT *DINNER*.

THE MORE I *HATE*, THE MORE HE *FOLLOWS* ME.

THE MORE I *LOVE*, THE MORE HE *HATETH* ME.

HIS FOLLY, HELENA, IS NO FAULT OF *MINE*.

NONE BUT YOUR *BEAUTY*-- WOULD THAT FAULT WERE *MINE*!

...OUR PLAY IS *THE MOST LAMENTABLE COMEDY AND MOST CRUEL DEATH OF PYRAMUS AND THISBE.*

A VERY GOOD PIECE OF WORK, I ASSURE YOU, AND A MERRY. NOW, GOOD PETER QUINCE, CALL FORTH YOUR ACTORS BY THE SCROLL. MASTERS, SPREAD YOURSELVES!

ANSWER AS I CALL YOU. NICK BOTTOM, THE WEAVER?

READY! NAME WHAT PART I AM FOR, AND PROCEED.

... BUT MASTER WILL, THEY ARE NOT *HUMAN!* I SAW *BOGGARTS*, AND *TROLLS*, AND, AND *NIXIES*, AND THINGS OF EVERY MANNER AND KIND.

AYE, AND THEY ARE *ALSO* OUR AUDIENCE, TOMMY. CALM YOURSELF.

OHH... HOW I DO *ACHE* TO MAKE A *SPORT* OF THEM.

NO. DO YOU BEHAVE, MY SERVANT.

YOU ARE MY KING; YOUR WHIM IS MY COMMAND.

HO HO *HO!*

WHAT IS *THISBE?* A WANDERING KNIGHT?

IT IS THE LADY THAT PYRAMUS MUST LOVE.

NAY, FAITH, LET ME *NOT* PLAY A WOMAN -- I HAVE A *BEARD* COMING!

I HAD FORGOTTEN ME, THESE CENTURIES IN FAERIE, WHAT RARE CREATURES MORTALS COULD BE...

...AND WHAT RARE *FUN.*

LET ME PLAY THE LION *TOO!* I WILL ROAR THAT I WILL DO ANY MAN'S HEART GOOD TO HEAR ME. I WILL ROAR THAT I WILL MAKE THE DUKE SAY,

"LET HIM ROAR AGAIN!"

"LET HIM *RROOOAARRR* AGAIN!"

HA HA HA HA

AHA

HA HA HA

EITHER *I* MISTAKE YOUR SHAPE AND MAKING *QUITE*, OR ELSE *YOU* ARE THAT *SHREWD* AND *KNAVISH* SPRITE CALLED *ROBIN GOODFELLOW*:

ARE YOU NOT *HE* THAT FRIGHTS THE MAIDENS OF THE VILLAGERY...?

IT'S *YOU*! HOBGOBLIN, THAT ACTOR PERSONATES *YOU*!

THOU SPEAK'ST ARIGHT: I *AM* THAT MERRY WANDERER OF THE NIGHT.

"I AM THAT MERRY WANDERER OF THE NIGHT"? I AM THAT GIGGLING-DANGEROUS-TOTALLY-BLOODY-PSYCHOTIC-MENACE-TO-LIFE-AND-LIMB, MORE LIKE IT.

SHUSH, PEASEBLOSSOM. THE PUCK MIGHT *HEAR* YOU!

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT I HEARD THIS TALE SUNG ONCE, IN OLD GREECE, BY A BOY WITH A LYRE.

Indeed, my lady?

YOU ARE A DEEP ONE. I WOULD I COULD FATHOM YOUR MOTIVES...?

Later, lady. Watch the play.

ILL-MET BY *MOONLIGHT*, PROUD TITANIA.

WHAT, JEALOUS OBERON? FAIRY, SKIP HENCE. I HAVE FORSWORN HIS *BED* AND *COMPANY*.

TARRY, RASH WANTON! AM I NOT THY LORD?

...BUT SHE, BEING MORTAL OF THAT BOY DID *DIE*, AND FOR HER SAKE I DO REAR UP HER *BOY*; AND FOR HER SAKE I WILL *NOT* PART WITH HIM.

THAT CHILD -- THE ONE PLAYING THE INDIAN BOY. WHO *IS* HE?

He is the son of Will Shekespear, the author of this play.

...THE NEXT THING THEN SHE, WAKING, LOOKS UPON -- BE IT ON LION, BEAR, OR WOLF, OR BULL, ON MEDDLING MONKEY, OR ON BUSY APE --

SHE SHALL *PURSUE* IT WITH THE SOUL OF *LOVE*.

A *BEAUTIFUL* CHILD. MOST PLEASANT. WILL I MEET HIM?

I have told Shekespear to call an interval, half-way through the play; and you will meet him then.

AHH. 'TIS UNCOMMON FOR YOU TO HAVE SUCH WAKING COMMERCE WITH MORTAL KIND...?

We came to an... arrangement, four years back. I'd give him what he thinks he most desires -- and in return he'd write two plays for me.

This is the first of them.

I UNDERSTAND.

SO.

WE HAVE FOUR LOVERS HEADING FOR THE WOOD. WE HAVE CLOWNS, WHO WOULD BE ACTORS; AND ACTORS PORTRAYING ME AND MY ROYAL CONSORT.

IN THE OLD TALE THERE WAS A LOVE POTION, THAT LEFT THE GODDESS RUTTING WITH AN ASS...

AH YES. THE LOVE POTION.

STAY-- THOUGH THOU KILL ME, SWEET DEMETRIUS.

I CHARGE THEE HENCE-- AND DO NOT *HAUNT* ME THUS!

O, WILT THOU DARKLING LEAVE ME? DO *NOT* GO!

STAY, ON THY PERIL. I ALONE WILL GO.

HANG ON. SO THERE'S THIS LOVE POTION, AND HE'S GOIN' TO MAKE HER MAJESTY LOVE SOMETHING NASTY... BUT WHERE DO THE YOUNG MORTALS COME INTO IT?

DON'T YOU *EVER* LISSEN? *HE'S* PUT THE POTION ON WOSSNAME, *LYSANDER*, RIGHT? *NOW HE'S* GOING TO FALL IN LOVE WITH *HER*, THE SKINNY ONE.

HUH?

YOU SEE, THE PUCK THOUGHT *HE* WAS THE OTHER ONE, SO WHEN--

CAN'T YOU BE QUIET? *SOME* OF US ARE TRYING TO LISTEN.

NOT HERMIA BUT HELENA I LOVE-- WHO WOULD NOT CHANGE A RAVEN FOR A DOVE?

THE PLAY GOES *WELL*, WILL. *HOWEVER*, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE ARE PERFORMING FOR SIMPLE APPLAUSE. AND EVEN WE GLORIOUS VAGABONDS MUST *EAT*.

WE SHALL HAVE AN INTERVAL, AT THE END OF KEMP AND CONDELL'S FIRST SCENE. WE CAN TALK OF SILVER THEN.

AY ME! FOR *PITY!* WHAT A *DREAM* WAS *HERE!* LYSANDER, LOOK HOW I DO QUAKE WITH FEAR!

METHOUGHT A SERPENT ATE MY *HEART* AWAY, AND YOU STOOD *SMILING* AT HIS CRUEL PREY.

LYSANDER...?

YOU MUST BE VERY PROUD OF YOUR FATHER, HAMNET.

PROUD? I SUPPOSE...

HE'S VERY DISTANT, TOMMY. HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HE'S REALLY *THERE* ANY MORE. NOT REALLY. IT'S LIKE HE'S SOMEWHERE ELSE. ANYTHING THAT HAPPENS HE JUST MAKES *STORIES* OUT OF IT.

I'M LESS REAL TO HIM THAN ANY OF THE CHARACTERS IN HIS PLAYS.

MOTHER SAYS HE'S *CHANGED* IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, BUT I DON'T *REMEMBER* HIM ANY OTHER WAY. *JUDITH*-- SHE'S MY TWIN SISTER-- SHE ONCE JOKED THAT IF I *DIED*, HE'D JUST WRITE A *PLAY* ABOUT IT.

"HAMNET."

COME ON, LADDIE. I AM BACK *ON* IN A MINUTE!

MOTHER *ORDERED* HIM TO HAVE ME FOR THIS SUMMER. IT'S THE *FIRST* TIME I'VE SEEN HIM FOR *MORE* THAN A *WEEK* AT A TIME, THAT I REMEMBER.

BUT WE LIVE FIVE DAYS' RIDE FROM LONDON, UP IN WARWICKSHIRE, AND SEE HIM SELDOM.

ALL THAT MATTERS TO HIM...

I WOULD BE *PROUD* OF HIM, IF HE WERE *MY* FATHER.

...ALL THAT MATTERS IS THE STORIES.

I'LL FOLLOW YOU, I'LL LEAD YOU ABOUT, AROUND, THROUGH BUSH, THROUGH BRAKE, THROUGH BRIAR.

SOMETIME A *HORSE* I'LL BE, SOMETIME A *HOUND*--

--A *HOG*, A HEADLESS *BEAR*, SOMETIME A *FIRE*...

WHY DO THEY RUN AWAY?

THIS IS A *KNAVERY* OF THEM TO MAKE *ME* A-FEARED!

THIS IS *MAGNIFICENT*--AND IT IS *TRUE*!

IT NEVER *HAPPENED*; YET IT IS *STILL* TRUE. WHAT MAGIC ART IS THIS?

WHAT *ANGEL* WAKES ME FROM MY FLOWERY BED?

ALL RIGHT. WHAT'S *SO* FUNNY ABOUT HAVING A DONKEY'S HEAD? EH? *EH?*

GO ON, *TELL* ME WHAT'S *SO FUNNY?*

...I LOVE THEE.

METHINKS, MISTRESS, YOU SHOULD HAVE *LITTLE* REASON FOR *THAT.*

AND YET, TO SAY THE TRUTH, *REASON* AND *LOVE* KEEP LITTLE COMPANY TOGETHER NOWADAYS.

BESIDES--IF YOU ASK *ME, NONE* OF THOSE *WOMEN* ARE WOMEN AT ALL. THEY'RE MALES. *I* CAN TELL.

HUMAN MALES TASTE MORE LIKE *RABBIT* THAN THE FEMALES --AND THEY *STICK* IN YOUR *TEETH*. OH YES.

DID HE SAY "PEASEBLOSSOM"? THAT'S *MY* NAME! WHAT DID HE *SAY?*

ALSO, THE MALES ARE *HAIRIER*, AND THEY LACK THE FLESH ON THEIR *CHESTS*.

WILL YOU *SHUT UP?* I CAN'T HEAR A *THING* WITH YOU RABBITIN' ON LIKE THAT ALL THE TIME!

GENTLES, THERE WILL NOW BE INTERVAL, FOR YOU TO FRESHEN, OR TO STRETCH YOUR LEGS.

OUR TALE BEGINS AGAIN TEN MINUTES HENCE.

YOU ARE THE AUTHOR OF THIS AMUSEMENT? IT STRIKES STRANGE MUSIC, SIR. METHINKS I SHOULD BE DISPLEASED, YET I AM NOT.

IT IS FINE WORK. IT IS MOST WORTHY WORK.

AND, UM, THESE -- NO -- THOSE THINGS DO BEST PLEASE ME THAT BEFALL PREPOSTEROUSLY.

AND PUCK MEETS PUCK -- IS THAT NOT PREPOSTEROUS? AND WHAT'S THIS I SPY? YOUR LINES?

OHO-HO-HO, I DO SEE SPORT HERE.

MY LORD. I AM THE, UH, LEADER OF THESE, LORD STRANGE'S MEN. AND THOUGH IT IS A JOY FOR US TO PERFORM, WE ALSO NEED TO PAY OUR WAY THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE.

YOU TALK OF GOLD?

WELL, YES...

GOLD. YOU ASK AUBERON OF THE FAY FOR GOLD...?

THEN YOU MUST HAVE YOUR GOLD, ACTOR.

WHY, THANK YOU, LORD! THIS WILL BE MORE THAN SUFFICIENT!

YOU PLAYED ME WELL, MORTAL. BUT I HAVE PLAYED ME FOR TIME OUT OF MIND.

AND I DO ROBIN GOODFELLOW BETTER THAN ANYONE.

They are well pleased, as am I, good Will. It is finely crafted, and it will last.

ARE YOU SATISFIED?

I am.

IF YOU ARE SATISFIED, THEN OUR BARGAIN IS HALF-CONCLUDED.

ONE OTHER PLAY THEN, CELEBRATING DREAMS, AT THE *END* OF MY CAREER...

YES, "*THE DREAM*" IS THE BEST THING I HAVE WRITTEN; AND IT PLAYS WELL. NOT EVEN KIT MARLOWE WILL BE ABLE TO GAINSAY THAT.

You have not heard?

Marlowe is dead, Will. He died in Deptford, three weeks back, of a knife wound to the head.

WHO *KILLED* HIM? INGRAM FRASER, I'LL BE BOUND. *CECIL'S* MAN.

Yes.

OH, KIT. I *TOLD* YOU NOT TO PLAY WITH POLITICS.

WHY DID YOU TELL THIS TO ME NOW? *THIS* NEWS COULD HAVE WAITED.

I did not realize it would hurt you so.

MARLOWE WAS MY *FRIEND.*

YOU DID NOT *REALIZE?* NO, YOUR KIND CARE NOT FOR HUMAN LIVES.

DARK STRANGER, *ALREADY* I HALF-REGRET OUR BARGAIN. BUT COME, OUR NIGHT'S COMEDY BEGINS ONCE MORE.

...AND BONNY DRAGONS THAT WILL COME WHEN YOU DO CALL THEM AND FLY YOU THROUGH THE HONEYED AMBER SKIES.

THERE IS NO NIGHT IN *MY* LAND, PRETTY BOY, AND IT IS FOREVER SUMMER'S TWILIGHT.

My lady? The play will start anon.

THANK YOU, DREAM LORD.

HOW NOW, MAD SPIRIT? WHAT *NIGHT-RULE* NOW ABOUT THIS HAUNTED GROVE?

MY *MISTRESS* WITH A *MONSTER* IS IN LOVE!

THIS MUST BE OUR *LAST* VISIT TO THIS EARTH, SHAPER.

THINGS HAVE CHANGED, AND WILL CHANGE *MORE;* AND GAIA NO LONGER WELCOMES US AS ONCE SHE DID.

I know. And I regret it much.

BUT *YOU* WILL *ALWAYS* BE WELCOME IN *OUR* LAND, DREAM LORD. THE GATES TO FAERIE ARE NEVER *FULLY* CLOSED. COME WHEN YOU WISH.

Perhaps one day I will.

DICK COWLEY ACTS WELL TONIGHT. I HAVE NEVER SEEN HIM FEIGN A FINER PUCK.

HE SEEMS ALMOST TWO-THIRDS HOBGOBLIN.

Father?

NOT NOW, CHILD. I MUST SEE THIS.

SHE WAS SUCH A *PRETTY* LADY, FATHER, AND SHE SAID SUCH THINGS TO ME.

LORD, WHAT *FOOLS* THESE *MORTALS* BE!

COME, SIT THEE DOWN UPON THIS FLOWERY BED, WHILE I THY AMIABLE CHEEKS DO COY, AND STICK MUSKROSES IN THY SLEEK, SMOOTH HEAD, --

--AND *KISS* THY FAIR LARGE EARS, MY GENTLE JOY.

WHERE'S *PEASEBLOSSOM*?

READY!

SCRATCH MY HEAD, PEASEBLOSSOM.

DID YOU *HEAR* THAT? *PEASEBLOSSOM!* THAT'S MEANT TO BE *ME*, THAT IS! ISS NUFFINK *LIKE* ME! *NUFFINK!*

IT *ISN'T* YOU, PEASEBLOSSOM. NOW BE QUIET.

YER. YOU SHUT YOUR FACE, PEASE.

ISSA *WOSSNAME*. TRAVELOGUE? NAH. *TRAVESTY*. THAT'S IT.

I'M THE ONLY PEASEBLOSSOM AMONG THE FAY. "*SCRATCH HIS HEAD*". *I'LL* GIVE HIM SCRATCH HIS BLEEDIN' HEAD!

PEASEBLOSSOM...

...AND *NOW* I HAVE THE BOY I WILL *UNDO* THIS HATEFUL IMPERFECTION OF HER EYES.

AND, GENTLE PUCK, TAKE THIS TRANSFORMED SCALP FROM OFF THE HEAD OF THIS ATHENIAN SWAIN.

MMMph! MUMUMPH MM MPPH!

LIKE I SAID. I'M NOT HAVIN' YOU SPOILIN' IT FOR EVERYONE.

I HAVE HAD... A MOST *RARE* VISION.

I HAVE HAD A *DREAM*... PAST THE WIT OF MAN TO SAY WHAT WIT IT WAS.

MAN IS BUT AN... ASS... IF HE GO ABOUT TO EXPOUND THIS DREAM.

METHOUGHT I WAS... THERE IS NO *MAN* CAN TELL WHAT.

I wonder, Titania. I wonder if I have done right.

And I wonder why I wonder. Will is a willing vehicle for the great stories.

Through him they will live for an age of man; and his words will echo down through time. It is what he wanted.

But he did not understand the price. Mortals never do.

They only see the prize, their heart's desire, their dream... But the price of getting what you want, is getting what once you wanted.

And had I told him? Had he understood? What then? It would have made no difference.

Have I done right, Titania? Have I done right?

HM? OH, IT IS A *WONDERFUL* PLAY, LORD SHAPER. MOST ENCHANTING AND FINE.

THE *EYE* OF MAN HATH *NOT HEARD*, THE *EAR* OF MAN HATH NOT *SEEN*, MAN'S *HAND* IS NOT ABLE TO *TASTE*, HIS *TONGUE* TO CONCEIVE, NOR HIS *HEART* TO *REPORT* WHAT MY DREAM WAS.

'TIS STRANGE, MY THESEUS, THAT THESE LOVERS SPEAK OF.

MORE *STRANGE* THAN *TRUE*.

I NEVER MAY BELIEVE THESE ANTIQUE FABLES, NOR THESE *FAIRY* TOYS. LOVERS AND MADMEN HAVE SUCH *SEETHING* BRAINS...

THE *LUNATIC*, THE *LOVER*, AND THE *POET* ARE OF IMAGINATION ALL COMPACT. *ONE* SEES MORE DEVILS THAN VAST HELL CAN HOLD.

THAT IS THE *MADMAN*.

THE LOVER, ALL AS FRANTIC, SEES HELEN'S BEAUTY IN A BROW OF EGYPT.

THE POET'S EYE, IN A FINE *FRENZY* ROLLING, DOTH GLANCE FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH, FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN.

AND, AS *IMAGINATION* BODIES FORTH THE FORMS OF THINGS UNKNOWN...

...THE POET'S PEN TURNS THEM TO SHAPES, AND GIVES TO AIRY *NOTHING* A LOCAL HABITATION AND A *NAME*.

"THE RIOT OF THE TIPSY BACCHANALS, TEARING THE THRACIAN SINGER IN THEIR RAGE?"

THAT IS AN *OLD* DEVICE, AND IT WAS PLAYED WHEN I FROM THEBES CAME *LAST* A *CONQUEROR*.

OH *KISS* ME THROUGH THE HOLE OF THIS VILE WALL!

I KISS THE WALL'S *HOLE*, NOT YOUR LIPS AT ALL!

You have asked me why I asked you back to this plane, to see this entertainment.

I... During your stay on this Earth the faerie have afforded me much diversion, and entertainment.

Now you have left, for your own haunts. And I would repay you all for the amusement. And more:

They shall not forget you. That was important to me: that King Auberon and Queen Titania will be remembered by mortals, until this age is gone.

WE THANK YOU, SHAPER. BUT THIS DIVERSION, ALTHOUGH PLEASANT, IS NOT *TRUE*.

THINGS NEVER HAPPENED THUS.

Oh, but it is true.

Things need not have happened to be true. Tales and dreams are the shadow-truths that will endure when mere facts are dust and ashes, and forgot.

IF YOU SAY SO, DREAM LORD. WE ARE *HONORED*.

THIS IS THE *SILLIEST* STUFF THAT *EVER* I HEARD.

THE *BEST* IN THIS KIND ARE BUT *SHADOWS*; AND THE *WORST* ARE NO *WORSE*, IF *IMAGINATION* AMEND THEM.

THE IRON TONGUE OF MIDNIGHT HATH TOLLED TWELVE. LOVERS, TO BED; 'TIS ALMOST FAIRY TIME.

I FEAR WE SHALL OUTSLEEP THE COMING MORN...

...WE FAIRIES, THAT DO RUN BY THE TRIPLE HECATE'S TEAM, FOLLOWING DARKNESS LIKE A DREAM, NOW ARE FROLIC.

COME, MY PUCK, AND *LEAVE* THIS FOOLISHNESS, FOR NOW THE TIME FOR OUR *RETURN* DRAWS NEAR.

ALREADY WENDEL OPENS UP HIS GATE.

WHAT, *LEAVE*, MY LORD?

WHEN THERE ARE *MORTALS* TO *CONFUSTICATE* AND *VEX*?

GO YOU ALL. YOUR PUCK WILL STAY--THE LAST HOBGOBLIN IN A DREARY WORLD. HO HO *HO*!

Goodbye, King and Queen. Fare Well, fair folk. Go in peace.

THAT IS NOT COWLEY! WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

WHAT'S *HAPPENING*?

IF WE *SHADOWS* HAVE OFFENDED, THINK BUT *THIS*, AND ALL IS *MENDED*:

THAT YOU HAVE BUT *SLUMBER'D* HERE, WHILE THESE *VISIONS* DID APPEAR.

AND THIS WEAK AND IDLE THEME, NO MORE YIELDING THAN A *DREAM*. GENTLES--DO NOT REPREHEND. IF *YOU* PARDON-- *WE* WILL MEND.

AND--AS I AM AN *HONEST* PUCK, IF WE HAVE UNEARNED *LUCK* NOW TO 'SCAPE THE SERPENTS' TONGUE, WE WILL MAKE AMENDS, ERE LONG.

ELSE THE PUCK A LIAR CALL.

SO GOOD *NIGHT* UNTO YOU ALL.

GIVE ME YOUR *HANDS*, IF WE BE FRIENDS.

AND

ROBIN

SHALL

RESTORE

AMENDS.

OHH...

WAS IT A DREAM, THEN, RICHARD?

A *DREAM*, WILL? *NO!*

FOR SEE-- A POUCH OF GOLD.

A POUCH OF YELLOW LEAVES.

BUT-- WE WERE *CHEATED!*

NO, FOR WE WERE PAID FULL WELL. *WHICH* OTHER TROUPE HAS PLAYED TO SUCH AN AUDIENCE?

FATHER! I HAD SUCH A STRANGE DREAM. THERE WAS A GREAT LADY, WHO WANTED ME TO GO WITH HER TO A DISTANT LAND...

FOOLISH FANCIES, BOY.

ON THE CART TODAY, YOU MUST PRACTICE YOUR HANDWRITING. PERHAPS YOU COULD WRITE A *LETTER* TO YOUR MOTHER, OR TO JUDITH.

COME ON, YOU *VAGABONDS!* STIR YOURSELVES!

WE CAN BE IN *LEWES* BY LATE AFTERNOON, AND THERE'S AN INN I KNOW WILL BE *GLAD* OF A TROUPE OF ACTORS WITH A NEW COMEDY TO SHOW...

HAMNET SHAKESPEARE DIED IN 1596, AGED ELEVEN.

ROBIN GOODFELLOW'S PRESENT WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN.

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
#1 BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

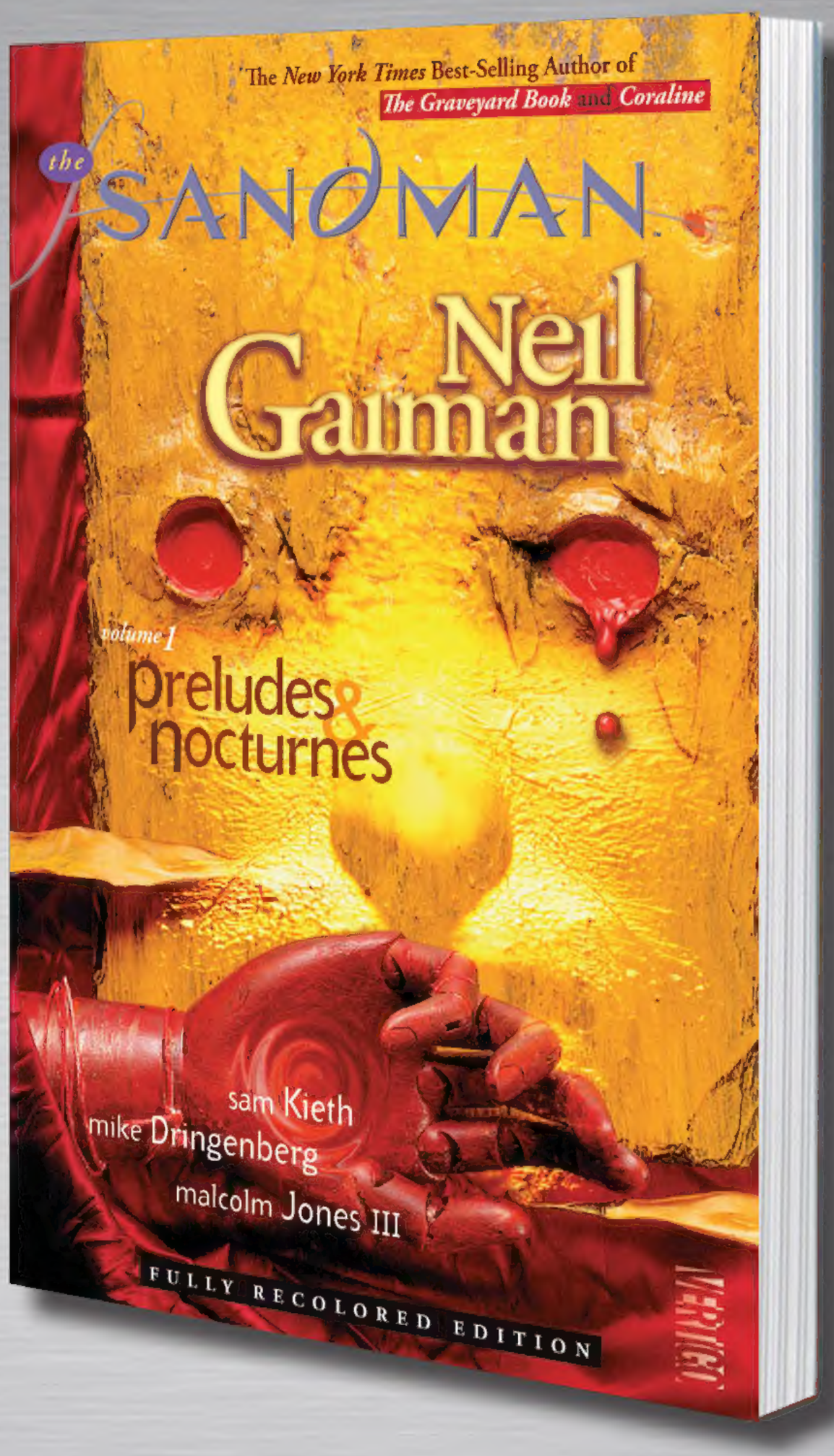
NEIL GAIMAN

"What Gaiman has written is a comics masterpiece."
– PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

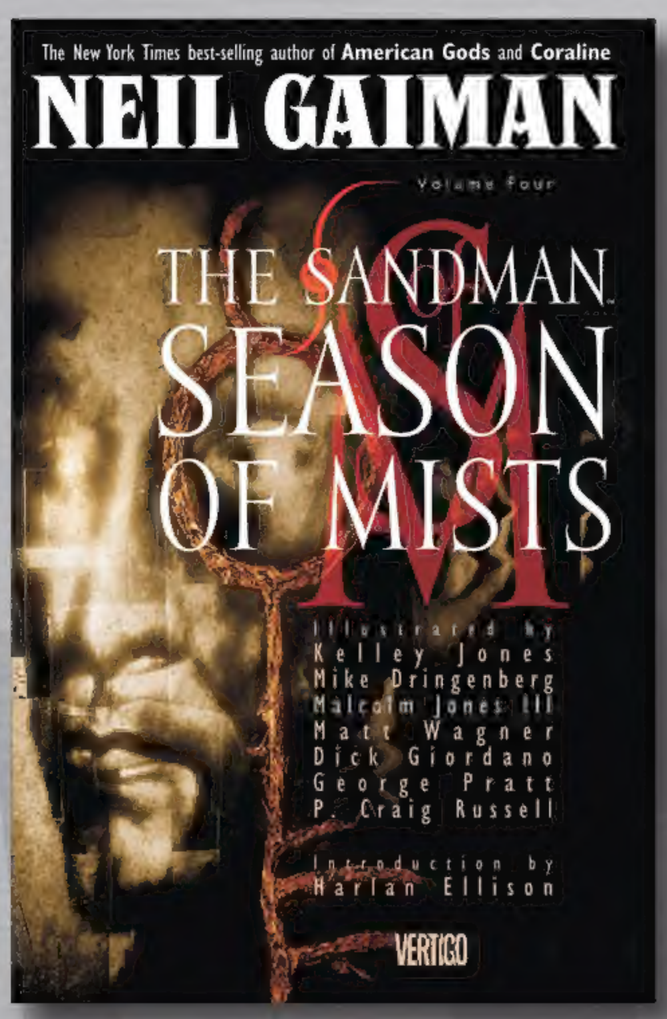
"SANDMAN just might be the smartest comic book ever written."
– USA TODAY

"The landmark comic-book series that actually made death seem cool."
– ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

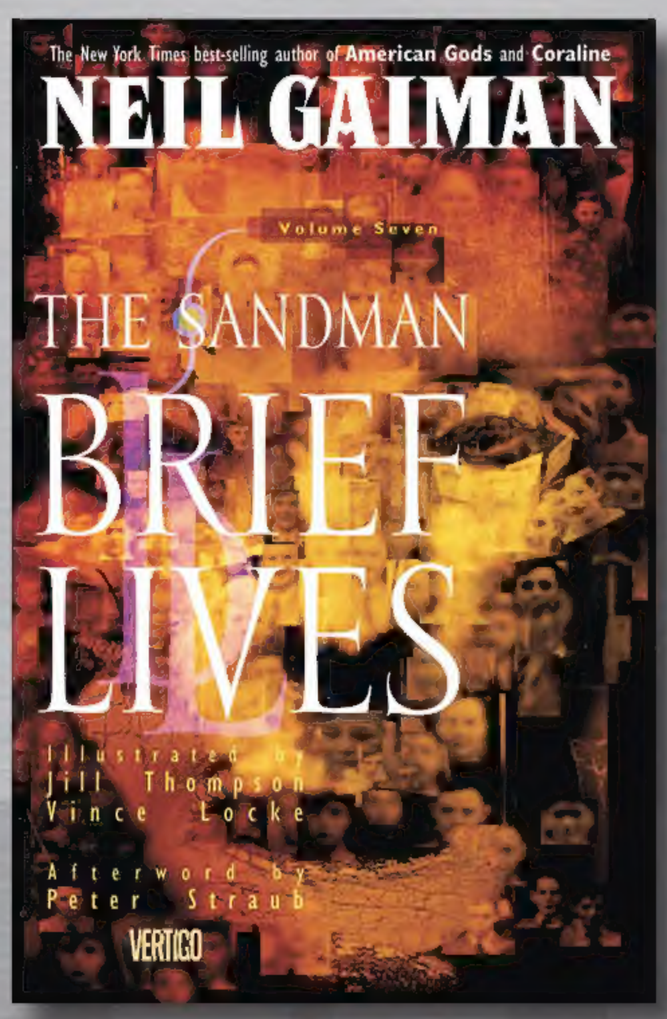
"This is the stuff dreams are made of."
– IGN.com



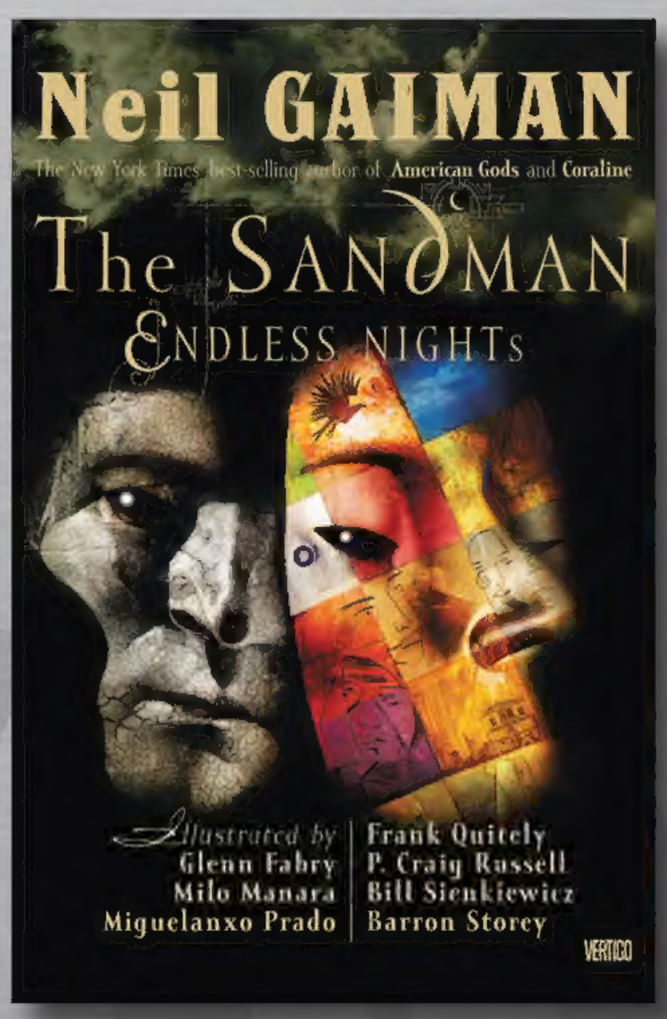
THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
SEASON OF MISTS



THE SANDMAN VOL. 7:
BRIEF LIVES



THE SANDMAN:
ENDLESS NIGHTS



Use the **BUY IN PRINT** feature to find a comics shop near you.
Check back here every week for **NEW DIGITAL RELEASES**!

Suggested for Mature Readers

E
E
M
P
I
R
SON OF ULTRON